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Identical letters dated 30 March 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the twenty-fifth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/272).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms the positions that it has previously communicated in its identical letters addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council responding to the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015). It would also like to stress the following points:

1. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic notes that, for the first time, the authors of the report have adopted a more objective approach to their treatment of certain aspects of the human rights situation in Syria. Nevertheless, the Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the Secretariat, in an attempt to appease certain parties on the Security Council, continues to take a dim view of the successes achieved by the Syrian Government — in conjunction with its national partners, the United Nations and international organizations operating in Syrian territory — in delivering humanitarian assistance to a number of regions, including several that are unstable. Those successes could not have been achieved without the close cooperation and facilities provided by the Syrian Government.

2. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also deplores the fact that, five years after the onset of the crisis in Syria, the Secretariat persists in ignoring the terrorist war being waged against Syria with foreign support and failing to mention it in its monthly reports. The Syrian Government reiterates its rejection of the attempts made by the United Nations Secretariat and certain Western States on the Security Council to deny the right of States, under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, to defend themselves, their people and their territory from terrorism and aggression. Such attempts are evident in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Secretary-General's report. It would be preferable for the Secretariat to speak positively and clearly about the successes achieved in the war against foreign-backed terrorism by the Syrian Arab Army and its allies, which have liberated numerous regions of Syrian territory where armed terrorist groups had been active and broken the siege that the terrorists had imposed on Nubul, Zahra' and other towns in Aleppo, Dar'a, Homs, Hama and Ladhiqiyah governorates. Those successes have opened the way

for displaced persons to return to their areas and homes, and reduced the number of Syrian refugees fleeing their regions because of terrorism perpetrated by armed terrorist groups.

3. The Syrian Government reiterates its rejection of the Secretariat's reliance in its reports on unreliable sources of information. In so doing, the Secretariat has followed the example of other United Nations entities, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which takes its information on Syria from such sources, including the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and Doctors without Borders, both of which are well known for their links to Western intelligence services. In the current report, the Secretariat has gone so far as to rely on what it calls "open sources". The Syrian Government deplores the Secretariat's failure to distinguish between counter-terrorism activities and terrorist acts. This is a clear indication that the Secretariat shares the bias of those sources of information, whose aim is to tarnish the image of the Syrian Government and its allies and undermine their counter-terrorism efforts (paragraphs 5, 6 and 15).

4. The Syrian Government reiterates that it continues to reject the insistence of Secretariat officials on applying the term "non-State armed groups" to such terrorist organizations as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Nusrah Front, Al-Qaida and associated groups that receive support and funding from a number of foreign Governments, notably those of Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions concerning counter-terrorism and the Charter of the United Nations. We have every right to ask once again: what is the Secretariat's legal basis for using that term, when several paragraphs of the report itself note that those groups have targeted and killed dozens of peaceable civilians (paragraphs 7, 10 and 15)?

5. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its long-standing position that the crisis in Syria requires a political solution based on dialogue among Syrians under Syrian leadership and without preconditions. It further stresses that the political approach goes hand in hand with counter-terrorism efforts, which will continue until all of the armed terrorist groups active in Syria have been eradicated. In that connection, the Syrian Government reminds the Secretariat that the Geneva meetings are meant to lead to a political solution, not a political transition. It furthermore reminds the Secretariat that the success of those meetings and any significant improvement in the humanitarian situation will depend, above all, on creating a climate conducive to a serious and non-politicized international and regional commitment to fighting terrorism and on an immediate end to the unilateral coercive economic measures being imposed on the Syrian people with no legal or moral basis.

6. The Syrian Government reiterates that it utterly rejects the Secretariat's bias, which is clearly evident in the report, against the support that the Russian Federation has provided, at the request of the Syrian Government, to Syria in its war against armed terrorist groups and individuals and their supply lines. The Syrian Government also reiterates its rejection of the Secretariat's attempts to equate the counter-terrorism efforts of the Syrian Arab Armed Forces and the Russian Air Force with the aerial bombardment being carried out by the so-called international coalition led by the United States, in violation of international law and, specifically, of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly given that the operations of the above-mentioned coalition have caused the deaths of scores of civilians and large-scale destruction of infrastructure in Syria.

7. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has fulfilled its national and international commitments through actions rather than words. It has facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all affected Syrian citizens and those with a similar status across the country. At the same time, the Syrian Government finds it odd that the Secretariat should attempt to justify the Turkish regime's refusal since 27 December 2015 to allow humanitarian assistance to pass through the Nusaybin crossing in Hasakah governorate, which has had a negative impact on delivery of assistance to affected individuals in that governorate.

8. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is surprised by the claim in paragraph 29 of the report that 58 inter-agency convoy requests have been submitted as of February 2016. Memorandum No. 29 of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Syria, dated 10 January 2016, mentions requests regarding 32 locations for implementation in the first quarter of 2015. It also states that 14 requests from 2015 remain pending and due for implementation in 2016. That would bring the total number of requests submitted by the United Nations to 46, rather than 58 as stated in the report under consideration.

9. The Syrian Government wishes to clarify that, in February 2016, it responded to 14 requests for joint convoys to the following areas: Dayr al-Zawr; Kafraya and Fu'ah in Idlib governorate; Madaya, Zabadani, Bludan, Tall, Mu'addamiyah and Kafr Batna in Rif Dimashq governorate; Wa'r in Homs governorate; and Sabburah and Harbnafsah in Hama governorate. On 9 March 2016, it approved United Nations requests to send humanitarian assistance convoys to the following areas: the western and eastern countryside of Aleppo city; I'zaz and Afrin in Aleppo governorate; the Rastan, Talbisah, Hula, Tir Ma'lah, Ghantu, Darah al-Kabirah and Wa'r areas in Homs governorate; and Yalda, Babila, Bayt Saham and Tall in Rif Dimashq. The Syrian Government requested the United Nations to send joint humanitarian assistance convoys to the following areas: Nubul and Zahra', the villages of Hadir, Wadihi, Azzan, Abtin, Tall 'Aran, Tall Hasil, Al-Madinah al-Sina'iyah, Shaykh Najjar, Shaykh Zayyat and Kafr Saghir in Aleppo governorate; the Jayrud, Damir, Bludan and Tall areas in Rif Dimashq governorate; and Tadmur (Palmyra) and Qaryatayn in Homs governorate. The Syrian Government stresses that the United Nations must act on those approvals within the specified time frames and refrain from fabricating excuses for failure to implement such requests.

10. On 23 March 2016, in its response to the April 2016 plans of both the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Syrian Government gave approval for the United Nations, ICRC and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to deliver humanitarian assistance to Madaya, Zamalka, Arbin, Zabdin and Kafr Batna in Rif Dimashq governorate; Kafraya and Fu'ah in Idlib governorate; the eastern part of Aleppo city; and Talbisah and Rastan in Homs governorate. The Syrian Government stresses the need for coordination in respect of determining the numbers of persons in need in those areas. With regard to Mu'addamiyah, Duma, eastern Harasta and Darayya, we will complete our review as quickly as possible in the light of the sensitive security conditions in those areas and the presence of armed terrorist organizations, including ISIL and the Nusrah Front, that pose a direct threat to United Nations, ICRC and Syrian Arab Red Crescent teams that will be delivering assistance to those areas. We draw your attention to the report from the Russian Ministry of Defence about armed groups opening fire on humanitarian assistance convoys in the towns of Harasta in Rif Dimashq and Kafr Nan in Homs governorate. Syria also strongly condemns the insistence by certain States that support terrorism on delivering assistance to Darayya, where there are only terrorists.

11. The Syrian Government rejects the Secretariat's attempts to equivocate regarding the so-called besieged areas, notably by inflating or downplaying the numbers of inhabitants in those areas according to its whims and motives. In its responses to the reports of the Secretary-General since August 2015, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has pointed out that the number of people besieged in Dayr al-Zawr was 300,000 rather than 200,000 as claimed by the United Nations, while the number of persons besieged in Fu'ah and Kafraya was 35,000, not 12,500. The Syrian Government notes that Duma and Darayya are hubs for such armed terrorist groups as ISIL and the Army of Islam. The Government is willing to consider the delivery of assistance to Duma. However, Darayya has been emptied of its inhabitants, who have fled to Mu'addamiyah. In that regard, paragraphs 39 and 43 of the report confirm what the Syrian Government has consistently maintained about conditions in certain areas classified by the United Nations as "besieged". Those paragraphs not only confirm that there was no evident sign of malnutrition and that access to food was not a problem in those areas, but also report violations being committed by the armed terrorist groups in those areas, including the recruitment and arming of children.

12. The Syrian Government is surprised that the Secretariat is once again referring to the siege of Yarmouk camp and putting the numbers involved at 6,000 people. This is a fatuous idea, and there is no justification for including it in such reports. The report itself indicates that some people in Yarmouk could go and receive assistance in Yalda (paragraph 38). How can it be a besieged area when the inhabitants can come and go into the adjacent Yalda area? We should like to note that from 2014 to February 2016, a total of 123,783 parcels of food aid had been delivered to the inhabitants of the camp. We also note that the Palestine refugees in Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham are inhabitants of Yarmouk camp who were displaced from the camp after the terrorist organization ISIL overran it in April 2015 in collusion with the terrorist Nusrah Front and other terrorist groups present inside the camp. Over the last few months, those groups have seized large quantities of assistance intended for Palestine refugees in the areas in question.

13. The Syrian Government cannot accept the claims that the delivery of medical assistance is being hindered. It is astonished that the report fails to provide updated information on medical assistance. Since the beginning of 2016, the Syrian Government has approved seven World Health Organization (WHO) requests to deliver medical assistance to the following governorates and regions: Duma in Rif Dimashq; Raqqah governorate; Ayn al-Arab, Shaddadah and Ra's al-Ayn in Hasakah governorate; Yabrud, Assal al-Ward, Bayt Sawa, Kafr Batna, Arbin, Zamalka, Zabadin and Maliha in Rif Dimashq governorate; Idlib governorate; Jandaris, Raju, Shiran, Sirrin and Dayr Hafir in Aleppo governorate; Rastan, Talbisah, Qaryatayn, Tadmur (Palmyra) and Taldu in Homs governorate; Qal'at al-Madiq, Ziyarah, Kafr Zayta, Murak, Suran and Si'in in Hama governorate; and Karamah, Ayn Isa and Suluk in Raqqah governorate. Paragraphs 26, 39, 47 and 48 of the report note that WHO was able to deliver medical assistance to hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries, including those who are in hotspots. In that regard, the Syrian Government recalls that it had requested WHO to provide information on how medical assistance was delivered to Hasakah city, Hawl, Shaddadah and Markadah in Hasakah governorate, and to Mayadin, Albukamal, Sur and Kasrah in Dayr al-Zawr governorate. However, the Syrian Government has not yet received any response from WHO.

14. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its position that cross-border assistance is futile, and condemns once more the Secretariat's insistence on

covering up the lack of transparency on the part of the United Nations with regard to such assistance. The notifications being sent to the Syrian Government still contain inaccurate figures, information, numbers of beneficiaries and particulars on which parties collect aid to distribute it to civilian recipients. The Syrian Government is surprised at the claim in paragraph 23 that no reports were received of any convoys being refused or found to be irregular. This claim is an attempt to cover up the major problems that beset the delivery of cross-border assistance from Turkey and other countries, and to gloss over Turkey's deliberate refusal to allow the passage of a significant amount of assistance through the Nusaybin crossing in Hasakah governorate.

15. The Syrian Government also reiterates that the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism is unable to confirm the delivery of cross-border assistance to beneficiaries. As a result, the Syrian Government has no way of knowing how and by whom humanitarian assistance is being distributed. What is certain is that cross-border assistance is finding its way into the hands of the armed terrorists, or that they are appropriating it, distributing some of it to their members and selling the rest at exorbitant prices on the black market. It is imperative that the members of the Security Council know that the Turkish regime and its intelligence agencies continue to use cross-border humanitarian assistance convoys to smuggle weapons to the armed terrorist groups active in Syria.

16. The Syrian Government reiterates its position regarding the need to cooperate with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the primary partner for United Nations relief activities in Syrian territory, in the distribution of assistance brought in across the border. That approach would ensure that the aid reaches civilians affected by the crisis in Syria and does not fall into the hands of armed terrorist groups. In January 2016, the Syrian Government approved the United Nations request to entrust the Syrian Arab Red Crescent with receiving and distributing cross-border assistance.

17. The number of foreign non-governmental organizations authorized to operate in Syria is 20, not 16 as stated in the report of the Secretary-General. The Syrian Government is surprised at the Secretariat's failure to update the relevant information. It reiterates its requests to the United Nations offices in Damascus to check their information and to submit objective reports, particularly to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

18. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to compel those States that support and finance armed terrorist groups to desist from providing any form of support and funding to those groups, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on countering terrorism and the financing of terrorism, particularly resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mounzer **Mounzer**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Annex I to the identical letters dated 30 March 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Crimes committed by ISIL, the Nusrah Front, the Free Army, the Army of Islam, the Army of Conquest and other armed terrorist groups ignored by the authors of the report

In the period 21 January to 21 February 2016, terrorists killed 367 civilians, including 25 children, and injured 776 civilians, including 92 children, across the governorates of Syria, not including Raqqah and Idlib.

On 21 February, the terrorist organization ISIL detonated a Toyota vehicle using a large quantity of highly explosive materials. The vehicle was detonated in a densely populated popular market in Sayyidah Zaynab city in Rif Dimashq governorate. Two other blasts followed; the first involved a gas cylinder, and the second was set off by a suicide bomber who detonated an explosive belt in the midst of civilians who had come to the aid of those injured by the first blast. The three terrorist blasts killed over 85 civilians and injured hundreds more, most of them children, women and elderly people. Serious material damage was caused to property and infrastructure.

On 21 February, the terrorist organization ISIL detonated two car bombs in quick succession in the Zahra' neighbourhood of Homs city. More than 47 people were killed and over 110 others were injured, most of them in critical condition. Significant material damage was caused to property and infrastructure.

On 8 and 9 February, armed terrorist groups belonging to the Nusrah Front fired mortar shells at Qardahah city and Bishalama village in Ladhiqiyah governorate, killing three civilians and injuring five others. Material damage was caused.

On 10 February, a terrorist detonated a car bomb in front of the main gate of the Police Officers Club in the Masakin Barzah area in Damascus governorate, killing one civilian and injuring another civilian and a child. Material damage was caused.

On 10 February, armed terrorist groups belonging to the Nusrah Front fired mortar shells at Dar'a city, killing and injuring civilians, and causing material damage. On 14 February, that same group fired mortar shells at Dar'a city, killing one girl and injuring 12 civilians, including women and children. Material damage was caused.

On 10 February, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Army of Islam and the Nusrah Front fired mortar shells at the Assad suburb in Harasta, Rif Dimashq governorate, killing and injuring five civilians.

On 14 February, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Army of Islam, the Nusrah Front and the Rahman Corps located in Darayya fired mortar shells at Sahnaya town in Rif Dimashq, killing two civilians and injuring 12 others, including women and children. Material damage was caused.

On 14 February, in Subayhah village, Aleppo governorate, armed terrorist groups, which some consider to be the moderate armed opposition, fired rockets at Safirah city, killing one boy and one girl and injuring three civilians, including one woman and one child. Material damage was caused.

On 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 February, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Bustan al-Basha, Amiriyah, Sayf al-Dawlah, Old City, Rashidin and Bani Zayd neighbourhoods of Aleppo city carried out sniper attacks and fired gas cylinders and mortar shells at the Sulayman al-Halabi, Salah al-Din, A'zamiyah, Maydan, Aziziyah, Jam'iyat al-Zahra', Halab al-Jadidah and Ashrafiyah neighbourhoods, killing six civilians and injuring 45 others. Material damage was caused.

On 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 February, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called Nusrah Front, the Nur al-Din al-Zanki battalion, the Islamic Front, Liwa' al-Tawhid, the Badr Martyrs Brigade, the Emigrants Brigade and Northern Shield located in the Bustan al-Qasr, Bustan al-Basha, Mashhad, Old City, Bani Zayd, Rashidin and Halluk neighbourhoods of Aleppo city directed bullets and sniper fire and fired gas cylinders and mortar shells at the Halab al-Jadidah, Shahba' al-Qadimah, Sayf al-Dawlah, A'zamiyah, Meridian, Sulayman al-Halabi, Fayd, Tishrin Street, Barun Street, Shaykh Maqsud, Sulaymaniyah, Jam'iyat al-Zahra' and Jamiliyah neighbourhoods, killing 17 civilians and injuring 100 others, including women and children. Material damage was caused during that period.

On 23 and 24 February, in Dayr al-Zawr, armed terrorist groups belonging to the so-called ISIL terrorist organization fired mortar shells at the Thawrah, Qusur and Harabish neighbourhoods, killing one civilian and one girl and injuring 14 others. Material damage was caused. On 26, 27, 28 and 29 February, similar terrorist attacks carried out by ISIL against the Thawrah, Qusur, Harabish and Muwazzafin neighbourhoods killed three children and four civilians, including one woman. Fourteen civilians, including one child, were injured, and material damage was caused.

Annex II to the identical letters dated 30 March 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Examples of humanitarian assistance that was delivered during January 2016 thanks to the facilitation provided by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and other international organizations, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Also listed is assistance delivered by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian aid (food and non-food aid and medical assistance), provided from inside Syrian territory by United Nations organizations, to various governorates, including Rif Dimashq, Idlib, Aleppo, Qunaytirah, Hasakah, Homs, Hama and Dar'a, but not to Raqqah or Dayr al-Zawr governorates. Some 1,844,790 Syrian beneficiaries (368,958 families) received food parcels provided by the World Food Programme through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Some 443,005 beneficiaries (88,601 families) received food parcels provided by the United Nations through national non-governmental organizations. The total number of the beneficiaries of United Nations assistance distributed from inside Syrian territory thus stands at 2,287,795 (457,559 families). The above-mentioned assistance was distributed by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to the governorates as follows: 64,746 parcels in Rif Dimashq; 18,022 parcels in Dar'a and its countryside; 2,360 parcels in Qunaytirah and its countryside; 4,000 in Idlib; 52,000 parcels in Aleppo and its countryside; 7,522 parcels in Hasakah; 43,546 parcels in Hama and its countryside; and 63,155 parcels in Homs and its countryside.

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian aid provided by ICRC from inside Syrian territory to most governorates, including Rif Dimashq, Idlib, Dayr al-Zawr, Qunaytirah, Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Idlib. A total of 129,375 food parcels were delivered, in addition to 37,112 canned food parcels and food aid for community kitchens. A total of 2,913 food parcels provided by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were distributed in Homs, Damascus, Rif Dimashq and Aleppo governorates.

The Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered humanitarian aid (food and non-food aid, medical assistance and water purifiers) provided by United Nations organizations and seven foreign non-governmental organizations operating in Syria to hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries in Aleppo, Rif Dimashq, Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Damascus, Homs, Hama, Suwayda', Tartus and Ladhiqiyah governorates.